Then, in a conventional manner, a user may selectively position the cursor **40** (see FIG. **1**) on the display screen **32** by simply tilting the pointing stick **70** in an appropriate direction. Appropriate circuitry in the module **52***a* senses the tilt direction and magnitude and, via the interconnected plug **74** and socket **76**, transmits the resulting cursor position control signal to the circuitry **38** (see FIG. **4**) which, in turn, correspondingly shifts the cursor **40** on the display screen **32**. Once the cursor **40** is positioned on the desired location on the screen **32**, either or both of the pick buttons **66** may be used to create a desired computer operation associated with the cursor-selected screen area.

Referring now to FIG. **5**B, to remove the module **52***a* from the base housing **12**, the Hard disk drive structure **42** is first removed as indicated by the arrow **86**. The release button **64** is then pressed to retract the detent projections **62** (see FIG. **1**) and withdraw them from the groove **78**, and the module **52***a* is tilted in a counterclockwise direction about the pins **68**, as indicated by the arrow **88** in FIG. **5**B, to thereby downwardly withdraw the pointing stick member **70** from the top base housing wall opening **14***a* and downwardly withdraw the plug **74** from the overlying socket **76**. Finally, as indicated by the arrow **90** in FIG. **5**B, the tilted module **52***a* is moved forwardly (i.e., rightwardly in FIG. **5**B) to horizontally remove the pins **68** from the groove **78** and withdraw the module **52***a* from the base housing cutout area **28**.

Next, as schematically depicted in FIG. **5**C, the module **52***b* is installed by tilting it downwardly and rearwardly, inserting its pins **68** into the grooves **78**, and moving it rearwardly into the cutout area **28** as indicated by the arrow **92** in FIG. **5**C. Module **52***b* is then pivoted in a clockwise direction, as indicated by the arrow **94**, to move the module **52***b* to its FIG. **5**D installed position in which its detent members **62** have snapped into the grooves **78**, the plug **80** has been moved upwardly into and blocks the wall opening **14***a*, and the plug **74** has entered the socket **76** to thereby electrically couple the touchpad and pick button circuitry to the cursor control circuitry **38** (FIG. **4**).

The installation of the touchpad module **52***b* is completed by re-inserting the hard disk drive structure **42** rearwardly into the cutout area **28** as indicated by the arrow **96** in FIG. **5**D, thereby positioning the disk drive **50** in an underlying, supporting relationship with the touchpad module **52***b*. With the module **52***b* installed in this manner, a user simply runs his finger along the top side of the touchpad **82** (see FIG. **2**) in a direction corresponding to the desired relocation direction for the cursor **40** (FIG. **1**), and then uses one or both of the pick buttons **66** to cause the desired computer operation associated with the screen area within which the relocated cursor is positioned.

While unique interchangeability of pointing device modules in the present invention has been illustrated using a pointing stick module and a touchpad module, it will be readily appreciated by those of ordinary skill in this particular art that other types of modules could also be used if desired. For example, a track module could be used in addition to the modules illustrated herein. Additionally, a module could be utilized in which receiving circuitry for a remote infrared mouse was incorporated.

It will also be readily appreciated that other types of module connection techniques can be employed if desired, and that if additional module support from another computer component is desired, the supporting computer component can be a component other than the representatively illustrated hard disk drive structure **42**.

The interchangeability of pointing devices provided by the present invention permits a computer manufacturer to advantageously utilize a single portable computer design having a selectively variable pointing device portion to thereby increase the potential market for the computer by essentially eliminating the problem of having, in the view of potential customers having a strong pointing technique preference, the "wrong" type of pointing device incorporated in the computer. Additionally, such interchangeability potentially permits a customer to purchase two or more types of pointing devices for two different users of the computer.

The foregoing detailed description is to be clearly understood as being given by way of illustration and example only, the spirit and scope of the present invention being limited solely by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. Electronic apparatus comprising:

a screen on which a movable image may be displayed; and

a housing structure having an externally accessible connection portion operative to releasably and interchangeably support a selectively variable one of a plurality of different types of pointing device modules each operative by a user of said electronic apparatus to controllably reposition the image on said screen.

2. The electronic apparatus of claim **1** wherein said electronic apparatus is a computer.

3. The electronic apparatus of claim **2** wherein said computer is a portable computer.

4. The electronic apparatus of claim **3** wherein said portable computer is a notebook computer.

5. The electronic apparatus of claim **1** wherein said externally accessible connection portion is operative to releasably support a pointing stick module.

6. The electronic apparatus of claim **1** wherein said externally accessible connection portion is operative to releasably support a touchpad module.

7. The electronic apparatus of claim **1** wherein:

the movable image is a cursor,

said electronic apparatus further comprises cursor control circuitry, and

said externally accessible connection portion is operative to connect the pointing device module which it supports to said cursor control circuitry.

8. The electronic apparatus of claim **1** wherein said externally accessible connection portion is operative to provide a releasable snap-in attachment of the pointing device module that it supports.

9. The electronic apparatus of claim **1** further comprising a plurality of different types of pointing device modules interchangeably supportable by said externally accessible connection portion.

10. The electronic apparatus of claim **9** wherein one of said plurality of different types of pointing device modules is a pointing stick module.

11. The electronic apparatus of claim **9** wherein one of said plurality of different types of pointing device modules is a touchpad module.

12. The electronic apparatus of claim **9** wherein said plurality of different types of pointing device modules include a pointing stick module and a touchpad module.

13. A portable computer comprising:

a base housing;

a lid housing pivotally secured to said base housing and having a screen thereon;

cursor control circuitry: and